

State of Alaska
Department of Law

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NEWS RELEASE



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National Consumer Protection Week Focuses on Identity Theft:
Attorney General and AARP Chapters Launch Tandem Efforts to Educate and Protect Alaskans

(Juneau) – Attorney General Gregg Renkes has joined a group of federal, state and local agencies and national advocacy groups, including the AARP, to launch the seventh annual National Consumer Protection Week (NPCW), February 6-12, 2005, highlighting consumer protection and education efforts around the country.

This year's NPCW theme, "Identity Theft: When Fact Becomes Fiction," focuses on minimizing the risk and containing the harm of identity theft. "I encourage all Alaskans to know how to protect their personal information," said Renkes. "Safeguarding your personal information, reviewing your credit reports and using strong passwords on personal computers are a few important steps consumers can take to minimize the risk of identity theft."

Consumers may call the Attorney General's Office at (907) 269-5100 to request a copy of the "identity theft" packet created specifically for NCPW. Brochures from this packet may also be downloaded from the Attorney General's consumer protection website at: www.law.state.ak.us/consumer. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) also offers a significant amount of information on this topic available online at: www.consumer.gov/ncpw.

"The past several years has seen significant growth in our state's senior population and an overall increase in the use of the Internet as a home personal and financial planning tool," said Renkes. It is unavoidable that older Alaskans will be increasingly exploited by scams. Education is a critical component of our future plans to target these types of illegal activities."

In the next few days and weeks, representatives from the Department of Law will be making the case for increasing its budget to address fraud against Alaska's seniors, including identity theft. Similar efforts have already taken place in many other states.

More

(ID Theft press release, con't.)

“Seniors are especially vulnerable to the increasingly diverse rip-off schemes that are on the rise across the country. According to the FTC, identity theft among seniors alone increased 218 percent between 2001 and 2002,” said Renkes. “That is why this legislative session we are asking the legislature to fund the creation of a special unit dedicated to fraud targeted at Alaska’s seniors. The two-fold goal of this program is to educate potential victims and prosecute those who would attempt to prey on Alaska’s senior population.”

If this proposal is funded, two new attorney positions and an investigator position will be created to focus on this effort.

In addition to efforts within the Department of Law related to the growing problem of identity theft, a number of organizations are focusing on education efforts targeted for seniors.

Representatives from the AARP’s national consumer protection league will conduct seminars in four Alaska cities next week, to educate members of the public on identity theft and a number of other topics ranging from investment scams to payday lending. The events are open to the public at the following dates and locations:

- **Tuesday, February 7th in Anchorage**, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Anchorage Senior Center, 1300 E. 19th Avenue. Contact: Chuck Lyons, AARP Sourdough Chapter President at 243-4601
- **Wednesday, Feb. 8th in Ketchikan**, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at the Pioneer Hall, #2 Pioneer Alley. Contact: Ed Zastrow at 907-225-2814.
- **Thursday, Feb. 9th in Juneau**, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at Fireweed Place, 415 Willoughby Ave. Contact: Liz Lucas, AARP Alaska State President at (907) 789-9655.
- **Friday, Feb 11th in Fairbanks**, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Noel Wien Library, 1215 Cowles. Contact: Karen Wood, Secretary, AARP Chapter #770, 907-452-2277

Governor Frank H. Murkowski will bring attention to the rising threat of identify theft in Alaska in a proclamation to be released, via the web, on Monday, Feb. 7. A copy of the proclamation can be found at: <http://gov.state.ak.us/proclamations.php>.

For additional information, please contact Mark Morones, Special Assistant for Communications for the Department of Law at (907) 269-6393. For additional information regarding the AARP seminars, please contact Ann Secrest at (907) 762-3302 or toll free at (866) 227-7447.

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